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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE GROUP

INTELLIGENCE REPORT

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COUNTRY Czechoslovakia/Austria

DATE:

SUBJECT Czechoslovak Economic Overtures to Austria

INFO. 19 November 1947

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SUPPLEMENT

SOURCE

1. On 19 November, conversations took place between Bohumil LAUSMAN, Czechoslovak Minister for Industry, and Austrian officials including HEINL, Minister of Trade and Reconstruction, and KRAULAND, Minister of Property and Economic Planning.
2. LAUSMAN said, in essence that his conferences in Bulgaria and Yugoslavia were very successful and would lead to the building of a southeastern European economic bloc. He declared that southeastern states have the greatest interest in seeing Austria become a member of this economic union. Pointing out that Austria could take part in such a bloc under especially favorable conditions, he declared that if Austria were to show resistance to western influence she would be assured of political support from the other southeastern states.
3. With the exception of Karl ALTMANN, Communist Minister of Electrification, who applauded the discourse, most of the Austrian officials contented themselves with taking note of what was said, and attempted to draw LAUSMAN out further.
4. The Austrian Ministry of Trade intends to concern itself no more this year with speculating on such problems, especially until the American loan is certain. The impression gained from the conversations was that the Soviets were simply employing another device to bring Austria completely within their economic sphere.

The following was obtained in a private conversation with LAUSMAN by an Austrian official:

5. The Czechoslovak Minister contended that Austria is an important ally for his country since Austria is Czechoslovakia's only link with the western world. He declared the Czechoslovak situation is not promising for two reasons: (1) The nationalization was accomplished so fast that it completely upset the country's economic balance: (2) the country has become too widely separated from her western connections.  comment: These last remarks contain a contradiction to the official stand LAUSMAN took in his speech. It seems likely that this is his personal opinion, which is quite logical since the Czech Socialists, of whom LAUSMAN is one, are not overly fond of the country's present eastward orientation.)

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